AFM 1-8

AIR FORCE MANUAL

AIR DOCTRINE

STRATEGIC AIR OPERATIONS

1 MAY 1954

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE

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DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON, *1 May 1954*

Foreword

1. *Purpose and Scope.* This Manual provides doctrinal guidance for the planning and conduct of strategic air operations. It will serve to guide and inform all personnel or activities involved in training for or coordinating in strategic air operations.

2. *Contents.* The Manual embraces the broad principles that experience and judgment have shown to underlie the proper application of strategic air power. The unity and decisive nature of air action, as stressed in AFM 1–2, is herein related to actions through the air against the vital elements of an enemy nation. This Manual is written from the viewpoint of a global strategy for war and, thus, relates strategic air operations to all other military actions designed to aid in achieving victory in the event of armed conflict. Detail has been avoided in order to emphasize fundamentals. Operational commanders and staff planners, exercising judgment in relating plans to circumstances, can be guided by the broad statements of principle contained herein.

3. *Nature of Doctrine.* Doctrine is not immutable. What is valid at any one time may be subject to rejection or modification as technology devises new weapons, and concepts of making war are altered to conform.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE:

N. F. TWINING
Chief of Staff, United States Air Force

OFFICIAL:
K. E. THIEBAUD
Colonel, USAF
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Concept of Global Strategy

a. In modern warfare, the physical security of a nation is dependent upon the decisive effects of its air forces upon the warmaking will and capacity of an enemy nation. Technological advances increase the range and speed of aerial vehicles as well as magnify the destructive power of airborne weapons.

b. Nations have no aerial shores. Nations do not possess natural geographical advantages arresting aerial communications. The air power of a major nation, particularly that portion designed for strategic air operations, is the primary military instrumentality of national power.

c. Strategic air warfare brings the entire structure of the enemy's warmaking capacity into the exploitable target area. Conversely, the total military, political, economic, and psychosocial fabric of our Nation in war also is subject to aerial attack by an enemy. Thus, modern warfare is conditioned by the fact that the capabilities of strategic air operations have intensified total and global warfare. These capabilities are given added emphasis by the fact that the strategic air *offensive* can be launched immediately at the outset of hostilities and despite losses inflicted by defending enemy forces, successful penetration is inevitable and devastating in effect. While control of the air remains essential to the later exploitation phases of operations and to the defense of land and sea areas, the motives and capabilities of the initial offensive render the conduct of that offensive possible without first defeating the enemy air force.

d. During times of relative peace, the inherent capability of powerful air forces exerts a direct influence upon politico-military decisions in all major nations of the world. The threat posed by these air forces is a major deterrent to aggressive military action by an enemy nation. The potentiality for destruction inherent in strategic air operations is a primary deterrent to war.

2. Function of Strategic Air Warfare in Global Strategy

a. Strategic air warfare is the primary offensive manifestation of national power in war because of its direct destructive influence upon the social structure and warmaking potential of an enemy nation. The primary function of forces engaged in strategic air warfare is to defeat the enemy nation. Strategic air operations, therefore, basically are designed to destroy or render ineffective the crucial portions of the enemy nation's structure—those elements within the enemy's homeland vital to its continued prosecution of the war. They also contribute directly and indirectly to gaining and maintaining control of the air.

b. By nature of their overall influence upon the entire enemy war effort, strategic air operations directly contribute to effective actions of other air forces as well as surface forces. In conjunction with theater air forces, they help to achieve and maintain control of the air, but contribute primarily by means of direct attacks against vital enemy installations or against crucial supporting systems, such as oil. They may participate in homeland air defense by means of directly attacking the enemy's strategic air forces. Strategic air operations can directly support the actions of surface forces. In turn, strategic air forces can be supplemented in their mission by the destructive capability of other air forces.

Chapter 2

TASKS AND FORCES

1. Primary Task

The primary task of forces engaging in strategic air operations is that of destruction or neutralization of the essential elements of the enemy nation's total organization for waging war. Operations intended to accomplish this task are conducted directly against the nation itself as distinct from its deployed military forces. The latter can be neutralized by the destruction of the warmaking capacity of the enemy nation. Operations against them are engaged in by strategic air units when such engagements are vital to the security of the homeland, friendly nations, or deployed friendly military forces. Generally, these operations are diversionary in nature. The decision for their conduct must be made in light of the seriousness of the threat, the value or importance of that which is threatened as compared to the strategic goal, and the effects of diverting the required force from its primary task.

2. Corollary Tasks

Corollary tasks include aerial mining, antisubmarine warfare, and interdiction of enemy surface forces.

3. Characteristics of Forces—General

The nature of strategic air warfare and its importance relative to a decision in total war are basic to establishing a pattern of essential considerations which determine the characteristics of those forces engaging in strategic air operations. Most important among these are the fundamental characteristics of the capability to penetrate and destroy, flexibility for attacks against varying types of targets, and mobility of the forces. These characteristics are demanded by considerations which include the types and location of targets to be attacked, enemy defenses, friendly base locations, the timing and duration of the campaign, the minimum supporting structure, including facilities, communications, and logistics, and the type and extent of reconnaissance requirements.

4. Relation of Targets to Forces

a. The targets and target systems brought under attack will vary with the nature of the task and the effects desired. In general, those systems included within the primary task of forces conducting strategic air operations have the important position of exerting influence on the entire structure of the enemy nation as well as upon all military operations.

b. The effects of these operations are broad, deeply penetrating, and when rigorously pursued will prove decisive in the total war. The targets may be fleeting in nature, that is, those selected from deployed military forces, or they may be permanently located and of massive construction. The attacks may require deep or shallow penetrations of enemy defenses, and the firepower may be delivered against relatively large or small installations. The diverse nature of these targets requires a corresponding diversity in the equipment and capabilities of the forces engaged.

c. The targets or target systems comprising the objectives of the corollary tasks normally are more narrowly defined than those of the primary task, and in general, they do not generate a sustained requirement upon the resources of the strategic air commander. Attacks upon these systems are generally designed to affect current operations of deployed surface and air forces. The effects caused by the destruction of these targets or target systems are usually of short duration. Their destruction serves a specific purpose in a tactical situation—the requirement for additional effort disappearing once the emergency is over. However, such operations as those directed against enemy strategic air forces may require substantial effort, particularly in the early stages of a war. Since the protection of our own and allied air capability for successful prosecution of the war is essential to victory, adequate provision must be made to eliminate the enemy's strategic air capabilities at the earliest practicable moment.

5. Force Requirements

The anticipated tasks and the target systems they generate are the basis upon which firepower and delivery requirements are computed. These requirements are then adjusted within total air force requirements for tasks other than strategic air operations. The targets themselves, quantitatively and qualitatively, dictate the type and quantity of firepower which must be delivered. Considerations of operational data influence the determination of total force requirements. The most important factors are: probable losses, abortive sorties, maintenance rates, bombing accuracy, and errors in bombing and navigation. Other factors of major importance which affect these computations are the estimated timing, extent and duration of the campaign, reconnaissance needs, degree of base security and the necessity for the stockpiling of support materials.

6. Force Composition

The composition of the force is tailored to meet the operational requirements dictated by the targets themselves and by the extent and type of enemy defenses, and by his capabilities for offensive action against deployed friendly forces. The vehicle carrying the firepower to the target must possess different characteristics depending upon the location of the target, its vulnerability to attack, and the type and quantity of the defenses which must be penetrated during the attack. The employment of modern weapons systems greatly improves the potential for flexibility in composition and tactics of those forces engaging in strategic air operations. Flexibility is a characteristic which must be built into the force. Modern technology permits the use of both large and small carriers in the strategic role. It has extended their range and has imparted the capacity for achieving mass in firepower to single air vehicles permitting the use of carriers possessing greater speed and penetrating ability. The composition of the force can be such that great flexibility becomes a significant characteristic.

7. Force Deployment

a. In general, forces for conducting strategic air operations should be made capable of conducting attacks against any target at any time on a global basis. Ideally, all forces should be in position at the outbreak of hostilities. However, recognizing unavoidable deficiencies, the planned deployment at any given time must evolve from a particular plan of operations. Consistent with budgetary, political, and security restrictions, base development and logistical supporting structure must be adequate to provide maximum mobility and flexibility to the command.

b. The force must be capable of the highest degree of mobility. Air bases must be dispersed to provide for security and to allow for range limitations of aircraft. Oversea bases must be developed to the extent that they are immediately capable of supporting operating units, either already in place or in process of movement, on a sustained combat basis. Since the force must be capable of immediate operations on a global basis, insofar as practicable, its dependence on surface lines of communications must be reduced to the lowest degree possible. The timing of the campaign and the speed with which it must go into action demand that the individual units be air transportable and capable of carrying on immediate and sustained operations from prepared bases.

Chapter 3

TARGETS

1. Intelligence

Fundamental to the choice of a target system and individual targets within the system is a high order of intelligence data on the entire spectrum of the enemy warmaking structure. Intelligence furnishes the indications to enemy weaknesses. Somewhere within the structure of the hostile nation exist sensitive elements, the destruction or neutralization of which will best create the breakdown and loss of the will of that nation to further resist. Target intelligence in its broadest sense is dedicated to the search for, and analysis of, these vulnerable elements.

2. Target Selection

a. In essence, target selection is based upon the distillation of knowledge or intelligence concerning the structure of a modern nation. The fabric of modern nations is such a complete interweaving of major single elements that the elimination of one element can create widespread influence upon the whole. Some of the elements are of such importance that the complete elimination of one of them would cause collapse of the national structure insofar as integrated effort is concerned. Others exert influence which, while not immediately evident, is cumulative and transferable, and when brought under the effects of air weapons, results in a general widespread weakening and eventual collapse.

b. At the outset of war the destructive capacity of modern strategic air weapons systems is such that virtually the whole of the enemy's economic, political, military, and urban social structure can successfully be brought under attack. While the nature of these weapons systems render them nonselective relative to small targets within a large area, their inherent characteristics permit the destruction or neutralization of the entire complex of industrial production, governmental, military, and economic control, and communication by attacks on relatively few aiming points. The wide gulf in potentialities existing between conventional and mass-destruction weapons demands a much broader frame of reference than heretofore needed in target selection. The greatest urban complexes in the world are subject to complete and immediate annihilation when certain weapons are applied. By way of contrast, and yet of equal significance, other weapons have the capability of eliminating or incapacitating the total population without effect on the physical structures of the surrounding area. Furthermore, a wide range of firepower capability is retained to permit proper weapon selection in relation to varying targets.

c. Modern weapons in their capacity to create rapid and widespread disruption within the homeland correspondingly transmit effects of great significance to the enemy's forces deployed in theaters of operation. The suddenness and magnitude of the disintegration of the communications and logistical support to deployed theater forces will have profound and cumulative effects. In consonance with the overall strategy of the war, targets are chosen so as to take every advantage that weapons and circumstances permit. Effects on theaters of operation are determined by the specific types and volumes of firepower applied on targets in the interior of the enemy nation.

3. Effects on Target Systems

a. The effects of the progressive destruction of certain target systems extend vertically through those systems, and generally are confined to disrupting a narrow but deep element of enemy strength. Of more significance, however, is the progression of the effects of this destruction to other industries or activities within the enemy nation. The destruction of his petroleum or transportation systems, for instance, would exert immediate and widespread influence upon his entire economy.

b. Other vertical types of target systems such as industries producing tanks, weapon carriers, antiaircraft guns and similar items are channeled into purely military uses. The destruction of these systems produces effects which are immediately confined to the specific industry attacked and, within time, will weaken his military forces. The time is dependent upon the stockpiles in his possession and his rate of usage.

c. Frequently the effects of attacks with modern weapons will destroy many activities whose functions are not directly related. It may be said that the attacks themselves are horizontal since selectivity is frequently impossible when massed firepower is applied. A heterogenous assortment of targets is wiped out and the effects spread laterally into the nation's life. A strike against a governmental control center surrounded by industry, communications facilities, transportation, labor forces, and other likely targets is an example of this type of horizontal attack.

d. The effects gained from the destruction of specific targets vary greatly with respect to time. In some instances, the destruction of a target produces effects which are narrowly defined and fleeting in nature. In others, with time, the effects are cumulative as various elements of the national structure are influenced, and eventually may grow to such proportions that collapse is inevitable. In other cases, the effects are instantly widespread and will influence the entire stategic posture of a nation. Time, then, is a variant and must be carefully considered with respect to the desired effects of a given attack upon a specific target or system.

e. Theoretically, it is possible to select target systems which will bring about the collapse of a nation through application of air power without seriously impairing its total resources. The selection of those systems is ruled by practical considerations. The capabilities and limitations of available weapons systems, of available intelligence, the enemy capability against our own homeland and allies, and the importance of time all greatly affect selection of those targets or systems which must be brought under attack. For example, depriving a nation of its food supply would bring about its collapse within a relatively short time; certainly within several months. Similarly, the complete disruption of the internal transportation system of a modern industrial nation would, for war purposes, cause complete collapse within a short period of time. This time would be dependent upon the degree of disruption, the location and extent of stockpiles of food and material, and the pressure brought to bear from external military force. The time element alone may preclude restricting attacks to the transportation system. Before decisive results could be achieved, the enemy's capacity for destruction against our own homeland may have caused our collapse. Limitations of available weapons systems may preclude concentration upon the food supply of an enemy nation. The problem then is to select targets, the destruction of which lies within our capabilities and which, if destroyed, will insure the double objectives of providing for our own survival and causing collapse of the enemy nation.

f. Modern weapons permit us to deliver attacks against all activity within a given area simultaneously. Modern firepower has so compressed the time element that attacks on all vital targets of an enemy nation can be made almost simultaneously by relatively small forces. Thus, the capability exists to deliver attacks which horizontally will destroy or seriously reduce the total warmaking capacity of a modern nation. These effects will not be confined to any one segment of the enemy nation but will disrupt his entire capability. Control of the population and military forces will become virtually impossible through loss of communication and organized control mechanisms. Provided that the entire attack is delivered in sufficient weight in the shortest possible time, collapse of the nation for war purposes will be inevitable. The rapidity of collapse will be directly proportional to the timing and weight of attack.

4. Dynamic Nature of Targets

a. Target intelligence is subject to continuous change. The availability of new or supplemental information may indicate a shift of emphasis or a rejection of past conclusions. In a like manner, current target lists may be altered by the development of new capabilities or changes in the political atmosphere. A greater capacity for the application of power resulting in a change of time factors and increased capability for destruction, may completely revise target lists. Likewise, in order to insure our own survival, changes in enemy capability may demand changes in selective target lists.

b. Estimation of the effects of the destruction of specific targets and target systems requires intimate and extensive knowledge of the enemy national structure. The interrelationship of all the essential elements of civil, economic, and military life is such that they cannot be totally separated. If accurate and timely estimates of effects are to be obtained, the data upon which these estimates are based must be exact and current. The analysis of the effects of destruction alone is only part of the process. The total requirement for target analysis must encompass the enemy capacity to replace, repair, and salvage the parts of his structure that have been weakened by air attack. The existence of reserves and stockpiles of vitally needed elements of his warmaking capacity also must be evaluated.

Chapter 4

EMPLOYMENT OF STRATEGIC AIR FORCES

1. General

a. Strategic air operations are designed to disrupt an enemy nation to the extent that its will and capability to resist are broken. To accomplish these operations, weapons of a suitable nature are applied against selected targets chosen at the highest air force level. This list then is submitted for approval at the highest national level to insure compatibility with the overall war strategy. The approved target list is furnished to the commander of the strategic air forces who is charged by broad directive to accomplish the destruction or neutralization of the targets listed therein according to indicated priorities.

b. Strategic air operations encompass any and all types of air operations designed to produce strategic effects on the enemy. All types of air weapon carriers (manned or unmanned) may be employed, and they may be launched from the land, sea, or air. The operational capability of the strategic air forces may be augmented by other services or nations when necessary and feasible.

2. Control

a. The success of strategic air operations is predicated upon the precise concentration of destructive power in time and space. To achieve this, an orderly plan for attack is requisite and shifts in plans must be made in relation to the requirements of the overall strategy for war. Coordination, mass, surprise, and mutual protection are achieved by placing under the operational control of one responsible commander all forces engaged in the conduct of strategic air operations. Forces so engaged may be comprised of land- or sea-based air vehicles, and they may be augmented by forces of any friendly nation. For all forces operating under his control, the strategic air commander will designate the targets to be attacked, the weapons to be used, the timing of the attack, and the routes of entry and withdrawal; this control will be exercised directly through the appropriate commander concerned.

b. The tool that permits the efficient exercise of control is communications. Centralized control of a global operation can be achieved only by a secure and rapid means of transmission that extends from the operating areas to the central controlling authority. Compression in time and space of the strategic air operation makes requisite an almost instantaneous knowledge of the force while it is in action—launching, en route, at the target, return, and the assessment of results. Prompt changes in plans and speedy execution are possible only when reliable two-way contact is established on a global basis.

3. Interdependence

a. In the framework of global strategy, strategic air operations are the principal means by which the war-sustaining capabilities of a hostile nation are rendered incapable of continuance. In achieving this, the operations are separate from other homeland or theater actions, but the effects of the operations are intimately related to all military action. The interdependence of all air operations cannot be overemphasized. Wherever possible, the actions of all air units operating against an enemy should be coordinated to a maximum degree. The coordination of entry routes, areas of attack, and timing of attack serve to increase pressure upon enemy defense forces thus affording a maximum assurance of success to the friendly forces.

b. Strategic air operations not only cause disruption to the internal life of an enemy nation, but eliminate the sustaining resources needed by enemy forces engaged in theater actions. The enemy homeland production and distribution system, as well as the communication and higher war direction centers, may be placed in such a state of disorder that neither intelligent guidance nor sufficient logistic support is provided to the deployed forces. Concurrently, the forces engaged may carry out operations designed to counter the long range air threat to our own homeland. The destruction of the hostile strategic air capability is a vital defensive measure executed through offensive action.

c. The diversion to other tasks of the forces engaged in strategic air operations must be stringently avoided except in cases of extreme urgency, and then only by the direction of the highest military authority. The dependence of the operation on the cumulative effects and the heavy weight of sustained blows demands that the integrity of the operation be maintained once initiated.

4. Flexibility

a. Successful strategic air operations are predicated upon a capability to accomplish the assigned task under any foreseeable condition imposed by the nature and range of the target, the weather, or enemy opposition. Variables and unknowns might seriously affect the operational capacity of the force if sufficient resiliency is not infused into it. Tactical and technical surprises created by the opposition must be countered swiftly with alternate measures, so that the offense continues to impose the conditions for battle, and the hostile defense is forced to decline.

b. To achieve flexibility, strategic air organization and forces must be designed to take swift advantage of any technological progress that promises superior performance. Further, technology and tactics must be joined together to achieve surprise and deception or, if necessary, to permit joining battle on acceptable terms. Escort, diversion, electronic countermeasures and range extension are some of the measures that may contribute directly by adding tactical flexibility to the main task of weapon delivery.

c. Reconnaissance and airlift of vital logistic items are basic indispensables to strategic air operations. Reconnaissance not only provides basic information for the selection and attack of targets but also provides the principal data upon which assessment is made of the effects of the operation and the disposition of the enemy. As such, adequate reconnaissance is prerequisite to the exercise of flexibility in operation. Reconnaissance activities may reveal that a major shift in the operational plan must be made. Forces may need to be redeployed. The speed and efficiency with which this can be accomplished is a measure of the flexibility of the force.

d. Reconnaissance activities must be geared to the necessary rapid assessment of weapon delivery operations as well as to the swift procurement of the basic target data that was unavailable at the outbreak of hostilities. Reconnaissance operations, then, are performed so as to facilitate timely acquisition of data and its rapid processing and movement from the operating areas to the central controlling authority of the entire strategic air operation.

e. Airlift employed to sustain the effort contributes directly to the effectiveness and flexibility of operations by insuring the swift movement of needed items. In the event of relocation of forces, airlift is essential for the movement of material and personnel required for continuing the tempo and magnitude of the overall operation.

5. Compression

The success of strategic air operations is directly proportional to the capability to deliver weighty and sustained attacks. The compression of firepower in time and space, by its rapid cumulative effect, denies the enemy time to recuperate from the shock of disruption and to pursue activities essential to his continuing resistance. Moreover, maximum and continuous delivery of firepower permits the exploitation of the advantage held by the attacker in the initial phases of the operation. Before the enemy can rally his defense forces to their maximum capability, the primary strategic air offensive will be completed, and the forces engaged in exploitation operations. Mass in space or time is of the essence in strategic air operations.

6. Readiness

a. The relatively fixed geographical location of the targets in strategic air operations permits wide latitude in preplanning. Operations carried out against the heartland can be based on a generally foreseeable situation within the enemy nation. The fluid condition of battlefields is not the usual pattern of activity in the interior of an enemy nation. Individual skills and group skills can be refined with specific objectives in mind. Extensive maneuvers to test plans are conducted under conditions approximating those likely to be found under combat conditions. Joint exercises or maneuvers involving forces conducting strategic air operations are performed under the direction of the strategic air commander.

b. The effects of strategic air attacks, when properly planned and executed, are decisive in modern warfare. The forces must be capable of immediate action against the enemy and of securing the initiative immediately upon the outbreak of hostilities. A lesser goal cannot provide reasonable assurance of our own survival.

c. The initial and subsequent strikes must be delivered in maximum force, and the initial confusion of the enemy defenses must be exploited to the utmost. While it is highly desirable to create and implement a foolproof plan, it is almost axiomatic that unknowns will force changes. A good commander will be capable of developing and executing alternate plans during the progress of war.

Chapter 5

SUPPORTING FUNCTIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS TO OTHER FORCES

1. Augmentation

a. Sufficient forces to accomplish the primary task must be available to the strategic striking force. However, the exigencies of war might create situations in which the principal operation must be augmented by the air capabilities of other forces. The request for augmentation is made to the appropriate military commander. Final decision rests with the highest level of military authority. Factors affecting the decision concern the relative overall strategic significance of the tasks presently engaged in by the forces in question. Other forces may participate directly in weapon delivery against strategic targets. Operational control of these forces is vested in the strategic air commander. Such control includes the designation of the target, the time of attack, and the route to and from the target. When employing forces of other services or nations, the integrity of those forces should be maintained insofar as practicable.

b. In rare instances, the strategic air commander may be directed to augment the efforts of other forces. In cases of extreme urgency where it becomes necessary to place control of all forces under one commander, operational control of the forces in question will be vested in the theater commander concerned. The theater commander then will delegate such control of all air units to the theater air commander.

2. Support

The global nature of strategic air warfare requires that the forces so engaged operate through and from various theaters of operation and other areas not under the jurisdiction of the strategic air commander. The commanders of the areas concerned are responsible for furnishing the necessary support. This support will include administrative, logistic, and base security measures. Under certain conditions direct operational support may be provided. The provision and utilization of forces for operational support is a matter for coordination among the commanders concerned.

a. Logistics. All logistic movement, with the exception of that immediately needed for operational contingencies, is accomplished by the most efficient means of transport practicable. Insofar as possible, all operating bases should be kept completely stocked. Sufficient transport of whatever type needed must be available for prestocking for wartime operations, and also for the continuing needs of peacetime operations. Once hostilities have begun, airlift may be the only dependable and adequate means of fulfilling the needs of the forces, particularly those deployed at great distances from the sources of supply.

b. Base Security. Extensive countermeasures may be necessary to meet the threat of enemy air attack and the danger of sabotage or overt attack on the ground. Internal security of the base is the responsibility of the base commander concerned. External ground security and air defense responsibilities for strategic air force bases vary as to place and circumstance. Normally, these functions are an integral part of the defense responsibilities of the designated military commander of the area in which the base is located. Naval, air, and ground support in whatever proportion needed to protect the bases must be allocated until the threat no longer exists, or augmented if the threat increases. In remote areas where neither theaters of operations nor the homeland air defense forces extend, and in circumstances where they are not available in the theaters and designated areas of responsibility, the strategic air commander will provide his own air and ground defense. This may include both active and passive defenses. Realistic testing and constant exercise of the security forces are the only means whereby the commander can reasonably insure the tenability of his bases.

c. Search, Rescue, and Recovery. All services have responsibilities for mutual aid in rescuing personnel and, when profitable, recovering vehicles and other equipment. The designated commanders of areas from which or through which strategic air operations are performed are responsible for this function. Furthermore, the specialized services of independent rescue forces, such as submarine, should be used to augment and aid operations of this type. For rescue and recovery to be effective they must be carried out rapidly. Coordination of the routes to and from enemy territory with appropriate authorities results in positioning rescue forces near the likely scenes of their operations.

d. Diversion and Escort. The diverting, dispersing, and turning aside of the enemy counter air forces gives freedom of action to the main striking force. Theater air forces or independent naval air forces contribute greatly to the strategic air operation by performing these functions. Decisions concerning allocating forces derive from careful consideration of the relative import of the operations requested as compared to present commitments. These matters must be coordinated with appropriate area or theater commanders. Conflicting views must be resolved at a higher level, the final decision resting with the highest military authority. A high degree of precision is needed to carry out these operations.

3. Coordination

The global nature of strategic air operations engenders requirements for extensive coordination of the routes and times of the forces engaged. Any one operation may involve every designated military area of the globe including the homeland. To avoid confusion, each responsible area commander must possess enough vital information to identify positively the outgoing and returning forces that use the air space for which he has defense responsibility. These responsibilities are mutual. Other forces engaging in operations that might have a bearing on concurrent strategic air operations must coordinate actions with the commander of the strategic striking force.

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